IRISH 1798 COLLECTION

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The Author of the Pamphlet "An Argument on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland" was Theobald Wolfe Tone - who simply signed himself a Northern Whig.

It was specially printed for the Society of United Irishmen of Belfast of which Tone was a founder member.

The Pamphlet bears no Printe rs name but the Printer was in fact "John Chambers of No. 5 Abbey St, Dublin."Mr.J.McManus in his bibliography of Tone (I) tentatively assigns it to Belfast, but there can be no doubt about the place and the printer since in a letter from T.W. Tone, written to him from Belfast, 17th October, 1791: "We are all very impatient for the Pamphlet which should be here by This.....
The Society of United Irishmen are to meet on Tuesday night and then I suppose, certain resolutions will be adopted and in due course transmitted to Tandy, in pursuance of the conversation at which you assisted with Drennan, Rowan & etc (2).

In a second letter Tone scolds Chambers for the "Stupidity of your man" who has apparently sent off to Belfast a bundle of copies of the prospectus for the National Journal instead of the Argument.

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AN

ARGUMENT

ON BEHALF OF THE

CATHOLICS OF IRELAND.

CATHOLICS.

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ON BEHALF OF THE

CATHOLICS OF IRELAND.

IN WHICH

THE PRESENT POLITICAL STATE OF THAT COUNTRY, AND THE NECESSITY OF A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM ARE CONSIDERED.

ADDRESSED TO

THE PEOPLE, AND MORE PARTICULARLY TO THE PROTESTANTS OF IRELAND.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY P. BYRNE, No. 108, GRAFTON-STREET.

M,DCC,XCI.

1791

TO THE READER.

IN the following Pamphlet I have omitted all general arguments in favour of a Parliamentary Reform, which equally apply to England and Ireland; and have confined myſelf almoſt entirely to ſuch as excluſively apply to our own country. The general queſtion has been ſo often and ſo ably handled, that the public mind is ſufficiently informed; and it is by no means my wiſh to ſwell my book, and fatigue my Readers, by compiling arguments, which, however powerful, have been repeated, until we may pronounce, that if they have not convinced, conviction is hopeleſs. I have argued, therefore, little on the abſtract right of the people to reform their

Legiſlature; for, after PAINE, who will, or who need, be heard on the ſubject?

IT may be neceſſary to premiſe, that when I uſe the term *Government*, I do not mean by it the Legiſlature, as it exiſts in theory, but a certain junto of men, of both countries, ſome of them Members of our Legiſlature, and others not, who poſſeſs the ſupreme power in this country.

TO

TO THE PEOPLE.

BEFORE I proceed to the object of this book, I think it neceſſary to acquaint the Reader, that I am a Proteſtant of the Church of Ireland, as by law eſtabliſhed, and have again and again taken all the cuſtomary oaths by which we ſecure and appropriate to ourſelves all degrees and profeſſions, ſave one, to the utter excluſion of our Catholic Brethren. I am, therefore, no further intereſted in the event, than as a mere lover of juſtice, and a ſteady deteſter of tyranny, whether exerciſed by one man or one million.

THE preſent ſtate of Ireland is ſuch, as is not to be paralleled in hiſtory or fable: Inferior to no country in Europe in the gifts

gifts of nature, bleſt with a temperate ſky and a fruitful ſoil, interſected by many great rivers, indented round her whole coaſt with the nobleſt harbours, abounding with all the neceſſary materials for unlimited commerce, teeming with inexhauſtible mines of the moſt uſeful metals, filled by 4,000,000 of an ingenious and a gallant people, with bold hearts, and ardent ſpirits; poſted right in the track between Europe and America, within 50 miles of England, 300 of France; yet with all theſe great advantages, unheard of and unknown, without pride, or power, or name, without ambaſſadors, army, or navy; not of half the conſequence in the empire of which ſhe has the honour to make a part, with the ſingle county of York, or the loyal and well regulated town of Birmingham!

THESE are, or ſhould be, to every true Iriſhman, mortifying conſiderations: It remains to examine what can be the cauſe of our ſo ſhameful depreſſion, to diſcover and to apply with temper and with firmneſs the remedy; and thus to reſtore, or if not reſtore, to create a rank for our country among the nations of the earth.

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THE proximate cauſe of our diſgrace is our evil government, the remote one is our own inteſtine diviſion, which, if once removed, the former will be inſtantaneouſly reformed.

IT is neceſſary for the phyſician to know the diſorder, and it is folly to conceal it from the patient himſelf. If he has the ſpirit of a man, he will hear the worſt with intrepidity, and bear it with fortitude: Death is very terrible, but there are things more terrible than death.

THE misfortune of Ireland is, that we have *no National Government*, in which we differ from England, and from all Europe. In England the King is reſident, and his preſence begets infinite advantages; the Government is Engliſh, with Engliſh views and intereſts only; the people are very powerful, though they have not their due power: whoever is, or would be Miniſter, can ſecure or arriſe at office only by ſtudying and following their will, their paſſions, and their very prejudices: Hence the intereſts of King, Miniſters, and People, move forward in one and the ſame direction, advanced or retarded by the ſame means, and cannot even in idea be ſeparated.

BUT

BUT is it ſo in Ireland?

WHAT is our Government? It is a phenomenon in politics, contravening all received and eſtabliſhed opinions: It is a Government derived from another country, whoſe intereſt, ſo far from being the ſame with that of the people, directly croſſes it at right angles: Does any man think that our rulers here recommend themſelves to their creators in England, by promoting the intereſts of Ireland, when it can in the moſt remote degree interfere with the commerce of Great Britain? * But how is this foreign Government maintained? Look to your court calendar, to your penſion liſt, to your concordatum, and you will find the anſwer written in *letters of*

* If this be doubted, let the proceedings of laſt ſeſſion with regard to the Arigna Iron Works and the Double Loom be remembered, to each of which the ſmalleſt parliamentary aid was refuſed. Why? Becauſe they might interfere with Engliſh intereſts; though the former would have kept 250,000*l.* annually at home, the greater part of which goes to England; and the latter would at once have doubled the weaving power of the kingdom in the linen, ſilk, and callico branches. But above all, let the memorable debate on the Eaſt India Trade be recalled, when Adminiſtration boldly threw off the maſk, and told Ireland ſhe ſhould have no ſuch trade, becauſe it might interfere with the intereſt of England. ☞ *They have ſuch a trade in America, and they deſerve to have it.*

gold:

gold: This unnatural influence muſt be ſupported by profligate means, and hence corruption is the only medium of Government in Ireland. The people is utterly diſregarded and defied: Divided and diſtracted as they are, and diſtruſtful of each other, they fall an eaſy prey to Engliſh rulers, or their Iriſh ſubalterns: The fear of danger is removed from Adminiſtration by our internal weakneſs, and the ſenſe of ſhame ſpeedily follows it: Hence it is, that we ſee Peculation protected, Venality avowed, the Peerage proſtituted, the Commons corrupted. We ſee all this at the very hour, when every where but in Ireland reform is going forward, and levelling ancient abuſes in the duſt. Why are theſe things ſo? Becauſe Ireland is ſtruck with a political paralyſis, that has withered her ſtrength, and cruſhed her ſpirit: She is not half alive, one ſide is ſcarce animated, the other is dead; ſhe has by her own law, as it were, amputated her right hand; ſhe has outrun the Goſpel precept, and caſt her right eye into the fire, even before it has offended her: Religious intolerance and political bigotry, like the tyrant Mezentius, bind the living Proteſtant to the dead and half corrupted Catholic,

and beneath the putrid maſs, even the embryo of effort is ſtifled: When the nation is thus circumſtanced, it is not to be wondered at, if even an adminiſtration of boobies and blockheads preſume to inſult, and pillage, and contemn, and defy her.

UNDER ſuch an Adminiſtration, if God Almighty could in his wrath ſuffer ſuch an one long to exiſt, the virtue and the talents of the land would be blaſted in the bud. No Iriſhman of rank could become a member or ſupporter of Government, without at once renouncing all pretenſions to common decency, honeſty, or honour: All great endowments of the mind, all lofty ſentiments of the ſoul would be neceſſarily and eternally excluded; and the Government, when once in ſuch hands, muſt remain ſo; political vice, like the principle of fermentation, would propagate itſelf, and contaminate every ſucceeding particle, until the fury of an enraged people, or the juſt anger of offended Heaven ſhould at length, by one blow, deſtroy or annihilate the whole polluted maſs!

BUT to quit hypothetic ſpeculation, and deſcend to facts:

I HAVE ſaid, that we have *no National Government.* Before the year 1782, it was not

not pretended that we had, and it is at leaſt a curious, if not an uſeful ſpeculation, to examine how we ſtand in that regard now. And I have little dread of being confuted, when I aſſert, that all we got by what we are pleaſed to dignify with the name of *Revolution*, was ſimply, *the means of doing good according to law, without recurring to the great rule of nature, which is above all poſitive ſtatutes:* Whether we have done good or not, and if not, why we have omitted to do good is a ſerious queſtion: The pride of the nation, the vanity of individuals concerned, the moderation of ſome honeſt men, the corruption of knaves I know may be alarmed, when I aſſert, that the Revolution of 1782, was the moſt bungling, imperfect buſineſs, that ever threw ridicule on a lofty epithet, by aſſuming it unworthily: It is not pleaſant to any Iriſhman to make ſuch a confeſſion, but it cannot be helped if truth will have it ſo: It is much better that we ſhould know and feel our real ſtate, than delude ourſelves or be gulled by our enemies with praiſes, which we do not deſerve, or imaginary bleſſings which we do not enjoy.

I LEAVE to the admirers of that era to vent flowing declamations on its theore-

tical advantages, and its viſionary glories; it is a fine ſubject, and peculiarly flattering to my countrymen; many of whom were actors, and almoſt all ſpectators of it. Be mine the unpleaſing taſk to ſtrip it of its plumage and its tinſel, and ſhew the naked figure: The operation will be ſevere; but if properly attended to, may give us a ſtrong and ſtriking leſſon of caution and of wiſdom.

THE Revolution of 1782, was a Revolution which enabled Iriſhmen to ſell at a much higher price their honour, their integrity, and the intereſts of their country; it was a Revolution, which, while at one ſtroke it doubled the value of every borough-monger in the kingdom, left three-fourths of our countrymen ſlaves as it found them, and the Government of Ireland in the baſe and wicked, and contemptible hands, who had ſpent their lives in degrading and plundering her; nay, ſome of whom had given their laſt vote decidedly, though hopeleſsly, againſt this our famous Revolution: Who of the veteran enemies of the country loſt his place or his penſion? who was called forth to ſtation or office from the ranks of oppoſition? not one! The power remained in the hands of our enemies, again to be exerted for our ruin, with

with this difference, that formerly we had our diſtreſſes, our injuries, and our inſults gratis, at the hands of England; but now we pay very dearly to receive the ſame with aggravation, through the hands of Iriſhmen;—yet this we boaſt of, and call a Revolution.

SEE how much the ſtrength of *the people* has been augmented by the arrangement of 1782! For two ſucceſſive ſeſſions, we have ſeen meaſures of the moſt undeniable benefit, and the moſt unqualified neceſſity to the country, enforced by all the efforts of the moſt conſummate ability, and repelled without even the ſhadow of argument by Adminiſtration; an Adminiſtration, conſiſting numerically of the individuals who had oppoſed the extenſion of your commerce in 1779, and the amelioration of your conſtitution in 1782. You find, or you are utterly ſenſeleſs, in the loſs of the Place Bill, the Reſponſibility Bill, the Penſion Bill; in a word, all the meaſures of laſt ſeſſion, that you have no weight whatſoever, that Adminiſtration deſpiſe and laugh at you, and that while you remain in your preſent ſtate of apathy and ignorance, they will continue to inſult and to contemn you.

WHY

WHY do I ſpeak thus of your famous exertions in 1782? Not to depreciate them below their value, for I honour, and I love the ſpirit that then animated you. I am ſure a great majority of thoſe who then conducted you, were actuated by a ſincere regard to your intereſt and your freedom; I am ſure that ſome of your leaders were men of high integrity, and ſome of conſummate wiſdom; I do believe that as much, or very nearly as much as could then be done, was done; and though I regret, yet I do not accuſe the caution that induced thoſe who acted for you, to ſtop ſhort in their honourable career: The minds of men were not at that time, perhaps, ripe for exertions, which a thouſand circumſtances that have ſince happened, cry aloud for: We are now, I hope, wiſer, bolder, and more liberal, and we have the great miſtreſs, dear-bought Experience, to warn us from paſt errors, and guide us on to future good.

I HOPE it appears from what I have ſaid, that the Revolution of 1782, is ſuch, as no Iriſhman of an independent ſpirit, and who feels for the honour and intereſt of his country, can acquieſce in *as final.* Much remains to be done, and it is fortunate

nate that the end propoſed is ſo moderate and juſt, the means ſo fair, ſimple, and conſtitutional, as to leave no ground for accuſation with the moſt profligate of our enemies, or apprehenſion with the moſt timid of our friends.

My argument is ſimply this: That Ireland, as deriving her government from another country, requires a ſtrength in the people which may enable them, if neceſſary, to counteract the influence of that government, ſhould it ever be, as it indiſputably has been, exerted, to thwart her proſperity: That this ſtrength may be moſt conſtitutionally acquired, and ſafely and peaceably exerted through the medium of a Parliamentary Reform: And finally, that no reform is honourable, practicable, efficacious, or juſt, which does not include as a fundamental principle, the extenſion of elective franchiſe to the Roman Catholics, under modifications hereafter to be mentioned.

I Beg I may not be miſunderſtood or miſrepreſented in my firſt poſition. When I talk of Engliſh influence being predominant in this country, I do not mean to derogate from the due exertion of his Majeſty's prerogative: I owe him allegiance, and

and if occaſion ſhould require it, I would be ready chearfully to ſpill my blood in his ſervice; but the influence I mean, is not as between the King and his ſubjects, in matter of prerogative, but as between the government and people of England, and the government and people of Ireland, in matter of trade and commerce: I truſt in God, we owe the Engliſh nation no allegiance; nor is it yet treaſon to aſſert, as I do, that ſhe has acquired, and maintains an unjuſtifiable and dangerous weight and influence over the councils of Ireland, whoſe intereſt, wherever it claſhes, or appears to claſh with hers, muſt immediately give way: Surely this is no queſtion of loyalty. The King of England is King alſo of Ireland; he is in theory, and I truſt in practice, equally intereſted in the welfare of both countries; he cannot be offended that each of his kingdoms ſhould by all honourable and juſt means encreaſe their own ability, to render him the ſervice due to him; he cannot rejoice, when he hears that his faithful Commons of Ireland by their own law exclude themſelves from a commerce with half the known world, in complaiſance to a monopolizing Engliſh company, though he may, as the common father of

both

both his realms, rejoice, when they vote 200,000*l.* to ſecure the very commerce in which they can never bear a part. It is therefore, I repeat it, no queſtion of loyalty: If the King can be intereſted in the queſtion, it muſt be on the ſide of juſtice, and of Ireland, becauſe his happineſs and his pride muſt be moſt gratified by the riſing proſperity of his people, to which title we have as much claim as the people of England; we love him as well, we are as faithful ſubjects; and if we render him not as eſſential ſervices, let our means be conſidered, and the blighting influence which perpetually viſits the harveſt of our hopes, and I believe it will be found, that our zeal in his ſervice is only circumſcribed by our inability.

It is, therefore, extremely poſſible for the moſt truly loyal ſubject in this kingdom deeply to regret, and conſcientiouſly to oppoſe the domineering of Engliſh influence, without trenching in the ſmalleſt degree on the rational loyalty, ſo long and ſo juſtly the boaſt of Ireland: His loyalty is to the King of Ireland, not to the Honourable United Company of Merchants trading, where he muſt never trade, to the Eaſt Indies: Nor is it to the Clothiers in York-

ſhire, nor the Weavers of Mancheſter, nor yet to the conſtitutional reforming Blackſmiths of Birmingham, that he owes allegiance: His firſt duty is to his country, his ſecond to his King, and both are now, and by God's bleſſing will, I hope, remain united and inſeparable.

In England we find a reform in Parliament is always popular, though it is but as a barrier againſt poſſible, not actual grievance: The people ſuffer in theory by the unequal diſtribution of the elective franchiſe; but practically, it is perhaps viſionary to expect a Government that ſhall more carefully or ſteadily follow their real intereſts. No man can there be a Miniſter on any other terms. But reform in Ireland is no ſpeculative remedy for poſſible evils: The Miniſter and the Government here hold their offices by a tenure very different from that of purſuing the public good. The people here are deſpiſed or defied; their will does not weigh a feather in the balance, when Engliſh influence, or the intereſt of their rulers, is thrown into the oppoſite ſcale. We have all the reaſons, all the juſtice that Engliſh reformiſts can advance, and we have a thouſand others, that in England never could exiſt: We have

have in common with England the royal influence, and the ambition of Miniſters to encounter; but we have alſo the jealous interference of that country to meet in every branch of trade, every department of commerce; and what barriers have we to oppoſe in our preſent ſtate of repreſentation? None: Of *four* millions of people, three are actually and confeſſedly unrepreſented; of the remaining fourth, the electors do not exceed 60,000, and the members whom they return, ſuppoſing them all, what I wiſh with truth we could, men of integrity, muſt remain for ever a minority, for their number amounts but to 82.

I FEAR I am waſting time in proving an axiom: Need more be ſaid, than that a nation governed by herſelf will purſue her intereſts more ſteadily, than if ſhe were governed by another, whoſe intereſt might claſh with hers? Is not this more applicable, if the governing nation has a means of perpetrating the miſchief without much odium, by making the governed ſacrifice her intereſts with her own hand? And can we deny that this is the caſe with Ireland? I may be told that we are not governed by England, and ſome proud and hot-brained Iriſhman will again throw

acroſs me the *Revolution of* 1782, wherein we "*glorioufly aſſerted our claim to legiſ-*" *late externally, as well as internally, for* " *ourſelves:* And I will admit, that we did aſſert our claim, but I deny that we have availed ourſelves of the exertion of the right: We are free in theory, we are ſlaves in fact: When high prerogative was tumbled to the ground, gentle influence ſucceeded, and with infinitely leſs noiſe and buſtle, retains us in our bonds: Before 1782, England bound us by her edict; it was an odious and not a very ſafe exertion of power; *but it coſt us nothing:* Since 1782, we are bound by Engliſh influence, acting through our own Parliament; we cannot in juſtice accuſe her, for ſhe is only to be traced by the miſchief ſhe ſilently and ſecretly diſtributes; but our ſuffering is aggravated by this galling circumſtance, that we purchaſe reſtriction of trade, and invaſion of conſtitution, at a very dear rate: Engliſhmen, under the old conſtitution, would ruin Ireland without fee or reward; their motive was to ſerve their own country; but Iriſhmen, under the new conſtitution, will not prefer the intereſt of England to that of Ireland,

Ireland, without weighty conſiderations; they expect, and indeed not without ſome colour of juſtice, to be paid extravagantly for the daily parricide they commit againſt the land which gave them birth; and to complete this diſhonourable traffic, the purchaſe of their votes comes, not from the pocket of England, who is to benefit, but of Ireland, who is ruined by the ſale.

THE Volunteers and people of Ireland were very ſoon after their imaginary Revolution, made, by grievous experience, ſenſible of the truth of what I have now aſſerted; they ſaw the extent of this alarming diſeaſe, and they as ſoon diſcovered the cauſe and the remedy. They ſaw they had, literally, no weight in the Government, and they clamoured for what, even on the limited plan then propoſed, would at leaſt have mitigated the diſorder—a *Parliamentary Reform.* But they built on too narrow a foundation, and the ſuperſtructure naturally overſet, when it was ſcarcely raiſed above the ground: They ſet out with ſacrificing the eternal dictates of juſtice, to temporizing and peddling expediency; they failed, becauſe they did not deſerve to ſucceed.—Graſping at too much, they loſt all; and

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the fatal morning, when the Convention broke up at the Rotunda, in one moment demoliſhed the glory, which five years of virtuous ſucceſs had flattered them would be immortal.

I HAD the misfortune to ſee them on the day of their diſgrace, when the great bubble burſt, and carried rout and confuſion, and diſmay, among their ranks; when *three hundred* of the firſt gentlemen of Ireland, girt with ſwords, the repreſentatives of the armed force of the kingdom, who by giving independence, had given to their Parliament the means of being virtuous, fled like deer to their counties, to return no more, after making a fooliſh profeſſion of their pacific intentions; fooliſh, becauſe it was evident that their anxiety was how they ſhould reach their homes, without attachments and incarceration. I ſaw with ſorrow their great leader obliged to deſcend to the farce of intreating them to form no raſh reſolution againſt that Government, which had in effect ſcourged them home in a ſtate of ridiculous diſtreſs and obloquy; and I wondered then, like a young man, why ſuch men, ſo circumſtanced, with the eyes of Europe upon them,

them, ſhould ſubmit quietly to treatment, which a few years experience has ſhewn was inevitable; they were diſgraced, becauſe they were illiberal, and degraded, becauſe they were unjuſt; through them the honor of their country was wounded, her name ſunk, her glories forgotten, and from the laſt day of the Convention, there has been *no people in Ireland.*

FROM their failure we are taught this ſalutary truth, that no reform can ever be obtained, which ſhall not comprehenſively embrace Iriſhmen of all denominations: The excluſion of the Catholics loſt the queſtion under circumſtances, that muſt have otherwiſe carried it againſt all oppoſition; the people were then ſtrong and confident, they had arms in their hands, and were in habits of ſucceeding; the ſame circumſtances cannot eaſily be ſuppoſed again to combine in their favour; but if they did, they muſt again fail.

THE Almighty ſource of wiſdom, and of goodneſs, has inſeparably connected liberty and juſtice: We muſt adopt or reject them together; to be completely free, we muſt deſerve to be ſo: It could not be conſiſtent with his impartial love to all his creatures, that a monopolizing Ariſtocracy

ſhould

ſhould ſucceed in wreſting their unalienable rights from their oppreſſors, at the moment they were acting the oppreſſors themſelves to millions of their fellow-ſubjects.

The queſtion now reſolves itſelf into this. Shall we be content to remain in our preſent oppreſſed and inglorious ſtate, unknown and unheard of in Europe, the prey of England, the laughing-ſtock of the knaves, who plunder us? Or ſhall we temperately and conſtitutionally exert our power to procure a complete and radical emancipation to our country, by a reform in the repreſentation of the people? If we chuſe the former, then are Iriſhmen formed of materials, whoſe nature I cannot, and do not wiſh to underſtand: It is hopeleſs attempting to work on ſuch ſpirits; but if they be of human feeling, if they partake of the common nature of man, if injuſtice and oppreſſion have not extinguiſhed every ſentiment which raiſes us above the beaſts that periſh, and makes us feel that our exiſtence is an emanation from the Divinity, then will I believe that my countrymen are not yet loſt and buried in hopeleſs deſperation; that to rouſe them

to

to exertion, it is but neceſſary to point out their duty, to excite them to juſtice, to ſhew them what is juſt.

LET us, for God's ſake, ſhake off the old woman, the tales of our nurſes, the terrors of our grandams from our hearts; let us put away childiſh fears, look our ſituation in the face like men; let us ſpeak to this ghaſtly ſpectre of our diſtempered imagination, the genius of Iriſh Catholicity! We ſhall find it vaniſh away like other phantoms of the brain, diſtempered by fear:

"HENCE, horrible ſhadow; unreal "mock'ry, hence!"

THE apprehenſions of moſt well meaning and candid Proteſtants, for of the bigots in that religion, as in every other, I make no account, when they ſeriouſly reſolve them into their principles, I believe generally terminate in two. Firſt, the danger to the church eſtabliſhment; and ſecondly, which they much more ſeriouſly apprehend, the reſumption of Catholic forfeitures; and of courſe ſetting the property of the kingdom afloat.

TO both theſe apprehenſions I anſwer, that the liberation of the Catholics will be a work of compact, and like all other com-

 pacts,

pacts, ſubject to ſtipulations. It will be for the wiſdom and moderation of both parties to concede ſomewhat; allowance muſt be made on the one hand for the difficult ſacrifice of parting with power, obtained in injuſtice, and long held by force; on the other hand there may be ſomething to be pardoned in men condemned to ignorance by the law of the land, and whoſe minds have for a century been irritated by injuries, and inflamed by open inſults, or ſtill more offenſive connivance and toleration.

BUT here a good old Proteſtant lady will tell me, that all compacts between us are in vain, for no faith, nor even oaths, are to be kept with heretics; and I know ſhe will have many to coincide in opinion with her. But if ſhe be right, I marvel that the oath of an Iriſh Papiſt ſhould ever be taken in a court of juſtice; yet I have myſelf ſeen it done, before a Proteſtant Judge and Jury, who decided, as if the witneſs were actually credible, and without enquiry into the articles of his faith. What becomes of the wiſdom of the Legiſlature, that has been able to deviſe no better means for the excluſion of Catholics, from the

the profeſſions and parliament, than oaths which, as not being in their conſcience binding, might be taken and broken without offence? Yet we find, and to our infinite loſs, that theſe oaths are to Catholics ſo formidable, ſo ſerious, and ſo obligatory, that they are content to renounce profit, honour, freedom, and even their country, rather than take them. Surely, if faith is not to be kept with heretics, there is not a Catholic in the kingdom but might be in Parliament to-morrow, had he no obſtacle but the oaths to encounter. If therefore, three millions of people have for near a century choſen to remain in *abſolute ſlavery*, rather than take certain oaths which they thought militated with their conſciences; I truſt, and believe there is an end of the argument, that oaths to heretics are not binding; an aſſertion the moſt artful and wicked that ever was deviſed, becauſe it perpetually recurs on the unfortunate Catholic, who in vain may proteſt and ſwear, that it is falſe, and that he abjures and utterly denies it; ſtill may the good Proteſtant with-hold his belief, for "*faith is not to be kept with heretics.*" I wonder it never occurred to the inventors and ſupporters of this abominable ſlander,

which at once cuts up by the roots all confidence between man and man, that they might at laſt convert and convince the Catholics of its truth, or at leaſt drive them to the fallacious principle of not being ſuſpected for nothing; a principle, which, if they were once to adopt, where is the Proteſtant intereſt of Ireland?

BUT to drop this argument, which indeed ſcarcely deſerves conſideration: Let us ſee the actual ſtate of property, and of the Catholics in Ireland at this day.

THE old families, the original proprietors of the ſoil, who were diſpoſſeſſed and ruined by forfeitures, have long ſince fallen into decay: The repreſentatives of a very great majority of them are, and have been in penury and ignorance, at the ſpade and the plough, without deeds or muniments of their eſtates for a century back: I do not ſay that this is univerſally the caſe; but I am ſure it is with an infinite majority: In the mean time, while the eſtates have been in Proteſtant hands, the Catholics who had made money by trade, the only road to wealth that was not blocked up againſt them by law, had no way to lay it out but in mortgages, many of them on thoſe very lands. Since the relaxation

relaxation of the penal laws, many Catholics hold profitable leaſes under thoſe tenures; many have purchaſed under the faith of thoſe various acts of attainder and ſettlement, the repeal of which is aſſumed as the inſtant and neceſſary conſequence of admitting Catholics to the rights of citizens. Is it to be thought that the wealthy and reſpectable part of the Catholics would promote or permit the unſpeakable confuſion in property, that would reſult from ſuch a meaſure as is imputed to them; and this from no motive, but an abſtract love of mere juſtice operating againſt their own obvious intereſt, and againſt a known law of the land, which ſays, that ſixty years poſſeſſion, however acquired, is a good foundation of property againſt all mankind: I hope it will not be aſſerted, that it would be the wiſh of the Catholics utterly to ſubvert all law; and in the very worſt event, if they were mad and wicked enough to frame the wiſh, they could not have the power. The wealthy and moderate party of their own perſuaſion, with the whole Proteſtant intereſt, would form a barrier againſt invaſion of property, ſtrong and ſolid enough to ſatisfy and remove the doubts of the wiſe, the apprehenſions of the cautious,

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the fears of the cowardly, every thing but the intolerance of the Proteſtant bigot, and the affected terror and real corruption of the Engliſh Partiſan, who would ſee in the cordial union, and conſolidated ſtrength of Ireland, the downfall of his hopes, and the ruin of the profligate market of his vote and his intereſt.

BUT it will be ſaid, that the Catholics are ignorant, and therefore incapable of liberty; and I have heard men of more imagination than judgment, make a flouriſhing declamation on the danger of blinding them, by ſuddenly pouring a flood of light on their eyes, which for a century have been buried in darkneſs: To the poetry of this I make no objection, but what is the common ſenſe or juſtice of the argument? We plunge them by law, and continue them by ſtatute, in groſs ignorance, and then we make the incapacity we have created, an argument for their excluſion, from the common rights of man! We plead our crime in juſtification of itſelf: If ignorance be their condemnation, what has made them ignorant? Not the hand of Nature: For I preſume they are born with capacities, pretty much like other

other men : It is the iniquitous and cruel injuſtice of Proteſtant bigotry, that has made them ignorant ; they are excluded by law from the poſſibility of education ; for I will not call the liberal connivance of the heads of our Univerſity, who ſuffer, perhaps by a ſtrain on their ſtrict duty, a few to ſmuggle a little of that learning, which is contraband to an Iriſh Papiſt, I will not, I ſay, allow that to be ſuch an education as every Iriſhman has a right to demand ; they cannot obtain degrees ; thoſe are paled in from them by oaths, *thoſe oaths of which they are ſo regardleſs*, and therefore we find they do not enter our Univerſity : If Iriſh Catholics be bigots to their religion ; if that bigotry which makes them dangerous, reſults from ignorance, ſurely it is the duty of a conſcientious Legiſlature, to labour by every means to remove the cauſe, and the effect will of itſelf ceaſe ; but it is not the policy of their oppreſſors to part with an argument, of which they make ſo excellent uſe ; and therefore it is, that the Iriſh Catholic clergy are driven into foreign countries to pick up as they may, a wretched, rambling kind of inſtitution, that deſerves not the name

of

of education. Can it be wondered, if the flock be not well taught by ſuch paſtors; what can they learn, when thus exiled from their native country, but foreign habits and foreign prejudices? What love can they feel for that conſtitution, what reſpect can they preach for thoſe laws which have driven them forth as vagabonds over Europe? Will any Catholic gentleman ſubmit to this? No? And what follows? That which daily experience ſhews to be one of the heavy misfortunes of Ireland, the conſciences, the morals, and the religion of the bulk of the nation, are in the hands of men of low birth, low feelings, low habits, and no education. But ſurely, the wretched Prieſt, and his ſtill more miſerable flock, are not to be puniſhed for the crime of ignorance, with which, as a peſtilence, they have been viſited by the unmitigable rage of Proteſtant perſecution. Give them education, open their eyes, ſhew them what is law, in ſome other form than that of a penal ſtatute; give them franchiſe, as you have already in a certain degree given them property; let them be citizens, let them be *men*.

BUT they are not prepared for liberty? What do we mean by *prepared for liberty?*

Was

Was the Poliſh nation prepared for liberty, when it was planted in one day? Were the French prepared for liberty? Yes, I ſhall be told, the Gentry were; and I anſwer, ſo are the Catholic Gentlemen of Ireland; the peaſantry of all countries are alike, with an exception in favour of England, and that exception ſpringing from liberty: They will follow their leaders; but I ſay, the Catholic Gentlemen of Ireland have had advantages of information far beyond either the Poles or the French, becauſe they have lived in its neighbourhood, and ſeen that in practice which they knew but in ſpeculation: Had Mirabeau waited to *prepare* his countrymen, he and they would have been ſlaves to this hour, and the Baſtile had ſtill hung over the ill-fated city of Paris. Is liberty a diſeaſe for which we are to be prepared as for inoculation; if ſo, and if faſting and abſtinence, and long ſuffering, be preparation, there are no men under Heaven better prepared than the Catholics of Ireland.

But can we believe that our wiſe and benevolent Creator would conſtitute us ſo, that it would require a long inſtitution to *prepare* us for that bleſſing, without which exiſtence is but a burthen?

DO we prepare our ſons to view the light of Heaven, to breathe the air, to tread the earth ?

LIBERTY is the vital principle of man: He that is prepared to live, is prepared for freedom.

WHATEVER is eſſential to the happy exiſtence of his creatures, God has not willed ſhould be difficult, or complex, or doubtful in its preparation: Plant then, with a righteous confidence in his goodneſs, the vigorous ſhoot of liberty in the land, and doubt not, but it ſhall ſtrike root, and flouriſh, and ſpread, until the whole people ſhall repoſe beneath its ſhade in peace and happineſs, and glory.

BUT it is objected, that certain tenets expreſſive of unconſtitutional ſubmiſſion to their Holy Father, the Pope, in temporal as well as ſpiritual matters, is a ſufficient ground for excluding the Roman Catholics from their rights. " If this were ſo, it " were a grievous fault," and I may add, " grievouſly has Ireland anſwered it." But whatever truth there might have been in ſuch an accuſation in the dark ages of ſuperſtition, when, by the bye, Ireland did but ſhare the blame with England, and all Europe ;

Europe; yet now, in the days of illumination, at the cloſe of the eighteenth century, ſuch an opinion is too monſtrous to obtain a moment's ſerious belief, unleſs with ſuch as were determined to believe every thing which ſquared with their intereſted views: The beſt anſwer to ſuch a calumny, if indeed it deſerves any, is the conduct of the Catholics of England at this day, and their ſolemn declaration ſigned by their Gentry, their Clergy, and their Peers, ſanctified beſides by the unanimous deciſions of ſeven of the firſt Catholic Univerſities in Europe, including that of Salamanca, of Valladolid, of Doway, and the Sorbonne *; wherein they concur in aſſerting, that neither the Pope and Cardinals, nor even a general Council, have the ſmalleſt pretenſion to interfere between Prince and Subject, as to allegiance or temporal matters. And I hope, as theſe opinions are ſolemnly given from Catholics to Catholics, they may have the fortune to eſcape the old and wicked cenſure, that, "*faith is not to be kept with heretics.*"

* See Lord Petre's letter to the Biſhop of St. David's.

It is not ſix months ſince the Pope was publicly burned in effigy at Paris, the capital of that Monarch, whois ſtiled the eldeſt ſon of the church. Yet the time has been, when Philip of France thought he had a good title to the Crown of England, from the donation of the Holy Father: The fallacy lies in ſuppoſing that what was once true in politics, is always true: I do believe the Pope has now more power in Ireland than in ſome Catholic countries, or than he perhaps ought to have. But I confeſs, I look on his power with little apprehenſion, becauſe I cannot ſee to what evil purpoſe it could be exerted; and with the leſs apprehenſion, as every liberal extenſion of property or franchiſe to Catholics will tend to diminiſh it. Perſecution will keep alive the fooliſh bigotry and ſuperſtition of any ſect, as the experience of five thouſand years has demonſtrated. Perſecution bound the Iriſh Papiſt to his Prieſt, and the Prieſt to the Pope; the bond of union is drawn tighter by oppreſſion; relaxation will undo it. The emancipated and liberal Iriſhman, like the emancipated and liberal Frenchman, may go to maſs, may tell his beads, or ſprinkle his

his miſtreſs with holy water; but neither the one nor the other will attend to the ruſty and extinguiſhed thunderbolts of the Vatican, or the idle anathemas, which indeed his Holineſs is now-a-days too prudent and cautious to iſſue.

I COME now to an old and hackneyed argument againſt Iriſh Catholics, that they are Jacobites, and for bringing in the Pretender: To this I have an hundred anſwers, but with fair reaſoners, it is probable that the firſt may be ſufficient. I ſay the man is dead; there is no Pretender: His brother, who ſurvives him, is in religion, a Cardinal, a Popiſh Clergyman; and what is ſome additional ground to think, he may not have lawful, or indeed any iſſue, is, that he is above ſixty years of age: If however, any ſtrenuous Proteſtant is diſſatisfied with this anſwer as inconcluſive, let him ſtate his objections, and I ſhall, perhaps, in the tenth edition of my book, ſet myſelf to remove them. In the mean time, let him conſider, that ſince the acceſſion of the Houſe of Brunſwick, there have been two bloody rebellions on behalf of the Stuart family in England; but not one ſword or trigger drawn in the cauſe in Ireland.

ANOTHER

ANOTHER argument that has been often ſucceſsfully uſed, is this: If the Catholics are admitted to franchiſe, they will get the upper hand, and attach themſelves to France, *for Ireland is unable to exiſt as an independent State!* But France is a Popiſh country, and ruled by an abſolute Monarch, whoſe will is the law; therefore it is better to remain in a ſtate of qualified freedom, though it be not complete, under the protection of England, than ſink into a province to France; *for to one or the other you muſt be content to be ſubject.*

THERE is no one poſition, moral, phyſical, or political, that I hear with ſuch extreme exacerbation of mind, as this which denies to my country the poſſibility of independent exiſtence: It is not however, my plan here to examine that queſtion: I truſt, whenever the neceſſity does ariſe, as at ſome time it infallibly muſt, it will be found that we are as competent to our own government, regulation *and defence*, as any State in Europe. Till the emergency does occur, it will but exaſperate and inflame the minds of men, to inveſtigate and demonſtrate the infinite reſources and provocations to independence, which every hour brings

brings forth in Ireland. I ſhall therefore here content myſelf with proteſting on behalf of my country, againſt the poſition, as an infamous falſehood, inſulting to her pride, and derogatory to her honour; and I little doubt, if occaſion ſhould ariſe, but that I ſhall be able to prove it ſo.

To the argument founded on this ſpiritleſs and pitiful poſition, time has given an anſwer, by bringing forth that ſtupendous event, the Revolution in France, an event which I do but name, for who is he that can praiſe it as it merits? Where is the dread now of abſolute power, or the arbitrary nod of the Monarch in France? Where is the intolerance of Popiſh bigotry? The rights of man are at leaſt as well underſtood there as here, and ſomewhat better practiſed. Their wiſe and venerable National Aſſembly, repreſentatives, not of their conſtituents, merely but of man, whoſe nature they have exalted beyond the limits that even Providence ſeemed to have bounded it by, have with that diſintereſted attention to the true welfare of their ſpecies, which has marked and dignified all their proceedings, renounced the idea of conqueſt, and engraven that renunciation

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on the altar, in the temple of their liberty: In that Aſſembly Proteſtants ſit indiſcriminately with Catholics: But I loſe time in dwelling on circumſtances, the mention of which at once ſuperſedes the neceſſity of argument.

I COME now to a very ſerious argument. If you admit Catholics to vote, you muſt admit them to the Houſe, and then you will have a Catholic Parliament. To this there are many anſwers: In the firſt place, it is incumbent on their opponents to ſhew the miſchief reſulting from even a Catholic Parliament. There has been ſo bold a ſpirit, ſo guarded a wiſdom, ſo pure a patriotiſm exerted by a Parliament of Catholics in this kingdom, as the experience of modern Proteſtant Parliaments can give us no conception of: Have we ever read, or have we forgotten the manifeſto of the Catholic Parliament held at Trim, in 1642? Let it be compared with our own declarations in 1782, and Catholics may well, with a generous confidence, ſtand the compariſon.

BUT it will be ſaid, that the laſt Catholic Parliament which we ſaw, ſet itſelf from the poſt, to reſume the forfeited lands, and

and repeal the act of ſettlement. That Parliament was ſummoned by King James II. at a time when his Proteſtant ſubjects had expelled him from his throne and kingdom. The Iriſh Catholics with a generous, though miſplaced loyalty, and with that ardent zeal which has on a thouſand occaſions outrun their judgment, regarded their Proteſtant Brethren, not merely as ſectaries and ſchiſmatics, but as rebels to their lawful Prince, whom it was their duty as well as, perhaps, their inclination, to puniſh by rigid confiſcation: The forfeitures and transfer of property were then recent, moſt of them within forty years. Many of the individuals who had been actually diſpoſſeſſed, muſt have been living; the ſons of many more; beſides, it was a ſudden and unhoped-for reſtoration of power to men, whom it had been the policy of Proteſtant aſcendency for 150 years to depreſs; and this reſtoration accompliſhed, not merely without the aſſiſtance, but abſolutely againſt the conſent of the Proteſtants of Ireland. Is it to be wondered at, under ſuch circumſtances, if the firſt exertions of that power were guided rather by reſentment and paſſion, than rea-

ſon? Is Catholicity to blame, or human nature? But ſee how different every thing is at this day! Moſt of the ancient Iriſh families are extinct: In the minds of the few remaining, one hundred and ten years of peace have cooled all reſentment; to the poſſeſſions of their anceſtors, the law has barred their title, and it was law before the Revolution: Their civil rights will be not extorted, but reſtored; not wrung by fortuitous violence, but imparted with benevolent juſtice. Their reſtoration to the rank of man, will be a work of peaceful contract, not of implacable war with their Proteſtant Brethren.

BUT if all barriers between the two religions were beaten down, ſo far as civil matters are concerned, if the odious diſtinction of Proteſtant and Preſbyterian, and Catholic, were aboliſhed, and the three great ſects blended together, under the common and ſacred title of Iriſhman, what intereſt could a Catholic member of Parliament have, diſtinct from his Proteſtant brother ſitting on the ſame bench, exerciſing the ſame function, bound by the ſame ties. Would liberty be leſs dear to him, juſtice leſs ſacred, property leſs valuable

luable, infamy leſs dreadful? If the Houſe of Commons were to be even wholly Catholic, ſtill the other eſtates of the realm, the Peers and the King would ſufficiently preſerve the balance. I have ſuppoſed in this argument, what I peremptorily refuſe to admit, that the whole Houſe of Commons muſt be Catholic, and that they would of neceſſity follow ſuch meaſures as would be prejudicial to the Proteſtant intereſt. But the fact is, that when we conſider the great diſproportion of property, or in other words power, in favour of the Proteſtants, added to the weight and influence of Government, there can be little fear of a majority of Catholic members exiſting in Parliament; and we know by hiſtorical experience, that when the Houſe was open to both religions indifferently, no ſuch majority exiſted, though in times when Catholicity flouriſhed, and the Proteſtant intereſt was feeble, comparatively, to what we ſee at this day.

IF however, there be ſerious grounds for dreading a majority of Catholics, they may be removed by a very obvious mode; extend the elective franchiſe to ſuch Catholics only as have a freehold of 10*l.* by

the year; and on the other hand, ſtrike off that diſgrace to our Conſtitution and our country, the wretched tribe of forty ſhilling freeholders, whom we ſee driven to their octennial market, by their landlords, as much their property as the ſheep or the bullocks which they brand with their names. Thus will you at one ſtroke purge yourſelves of the groſs and feculent maſs which contaminates the Proteſtant intereſt, and reſtore their natural and juſt weight to the ſound and reſpectable part of the Catholic community, without throwing into their hands ſo much power as might enable them to dictate the law; but I again and again proteſt, that I conceive there is not a ſhadow of ground for ſuch apprehenſion; but other men may be more cautious than I, and I would wiſh to obviate and ſatisfy the apprehenſions of the moſt timid.

For my own part, I ſee Proteſtantiſm is no guard againſt corruption; I ſee the moſt profligate venality, the moſt ſhameleſs and avowed proſtitution of principle go forward year after year, in aſſemblies, where no Catholic can by law appear: I ſee the people plundered and deſpiſed, powerleſs

powerleſs and ridiculous, held in contempt and defiance, and with ſuch a proſpect before my eyes, I for one, feel little dread at the thoughts of change, where no change can eaſily be for the worſe. Religion has at this day little influence on politics; and when I contraſt the National Aſſembly of Frenchmen and Catholics, with other great Bodies which I could name, I confeſs, I feel little propenſity to boaſt that I have the honour to be an Iriſhman, and a Proteſtant.

I HAVE now examined ſuch arguments as are moſt generally uſed to gloſs over that monſtrous injuſtice which has held for a century three millions of my countrymen in ignorance and bondage. I have endeavoured to give them ſuch anſwers, as a very plain underſtanding could furniſh; and I have a confidence that my attempt is but a precurſor of many efforts, more worthy of the merits of the cauſe. The dark cloud which has ſo long enveloped the Iriſh Catholic with hopeleſs miſery, at length begins to break, and the ſun of liberty may once more illuminate his mind, and elevate his heart.

I HAVE

I HAVE hitherto conſidered the caſe of the Catholics in the view of expediency, and as with reference to Proteſtants I have done ſo, becauſe I confeſs I was afraid of the lengths to which reaſon would inevitably lead me, if I were to take it up as a queſtion of mere right, and with reference to the feelings of the Catholics themſelves: They have remained now for above a century in ſlavery; they may have loſt the wiſh for freedom; and at any rate, I am not very ſure that the man is their friend, who points out to them their miſery, and their degradation, at a time when it is not phyſically certain that their complete emancipation ſhall immediately follow: Perhaps even this feeble attempt on their behalf, may prejudice the cauſe which it is meant to defend. If it ſhould be ſo, I may lament; but I ſhall never wiſh to recall it.

WHAT anſwer could we make to the Catholics of Ireland, if they were to riſe, and with one voice, demand their rights as Citizens, and as Men? What reply juſtifiable to God, and to our conſcience? None. We prate and babble, and write books, and publiſh them, filled with ſentiments of freedom,

freedom, and abhorrence of tyranny, and lofty praiſes of *the Rights of Man!* Yet we are content to hold three millions of our fellow creatures, and fellow ſubjects, in degradation and infamy, and contempt, or to ſum up all in one word, in *Slavery!*

ON what chapter of the *Rights of Man*, do we ground our title to liberty, in the moment that we are riveting the fetters of the wretched Roman Catholics of Ireland. Shall they not ſay to us, " Are we not men, as ye are, ſtamped with the image of our Maker, walking erect, beholding the ſame light, breathing the ſame air as Proteſtants: Hath not a Catholic hands; hath not a Catholic eyes, dimenſions, organs, paſſions? Fed with the ſame food, hurt by the ſame weapons, healed by the ſame means, warmed and cooled by the ſame ſummer and winter, as a Proteſtant is. If ye prick us, do we not bleed? If ye tickle us, do we not laugh? If ye poiſon us, do we not die? And if ye injure us, *ſhall we not revenge?* Hath a Catholic the mark of the beaſt in his forehead, that he ſhould wander over his native ſoil like the accurſed Cain, with his hand againſt every man, and every man's hand againſt him?

God

God Almighty in his juſt anger, viſits the ſins of the fathers upon the children, not beyond the third or fourth generation, even of thoſe that hate him ; and will nothing ſhort of our eternal ſlavery ſatisfy the unmitigable rage of Proteſtant oppreſſion ? How have *we* offended ? The offence of our anceſtors, was their property and their power ; we have neither ; they are long ſince ſacrificed, and you are in undiſputed poſſeſſion of the ſpoil. Do not then grudge us exiſtence, or that for which alone man ſhould exiſt—Liberty : Say not that we are unprepared ; Liberty prepares herſelf : Say not that we are ignorant, leſt ye judge yourſelves. Why are we ſo ? Enough has been done and ſuffered by us to ſatisfy not only juſtice and law, but cowardice, malice, and revenge ; it is time our perſecution ſhould ceaſe. The nations of Europe are vindicating themſelves into freedom ; ye talk about it yourſelves, and do ye think that we will be left behind : If you will join us, we are ready to embrace you ; if you will not, ſhame and diſcomfiture await you. For us, whether ſupported or not, we are prepared for either event. If Freedom comes, we will claſp her to

our

our hearts, and ſurrender her, but with our laſt breath; if ſlavery is ſtill to be our portion, we have learned by bitter experience to endure; and to that righteous and juſt God, who has created and preſerves us, we commit our cauſe, nothing doubting, but in the fullneſs of his good time, that he will manifeſt his glorious mercies, even unto us; though for wiſe purpoſes, he may think fit to continue us a little longer under the rod of our oppreſſors, the miniſters of his wrath."

If ſuch an appeal were made, *what ſhould we anſwer?* Let him that can, deviſe a reply; I know of none.

The argument now ſtands thus: To oppoſe the unconſtitutional weight of Government, ſubject as that Government is to the ſtill more unconſtitutional and unjuſt bias of Engliſh influence, it is abſolutely neceſſary that the weight of the people's ſcale ſhould be encreaſed. This object can only be attained by a Reform in Parliament, and no reform is practicable, that ſhall not include the Catholics. Theſe three ſteps are inſeparably connected, and let not any man deceive himſelf, by ſuppoſing the firſt attainable without the ſecond, or either without the third. Is the

preſent Government of Ireland ſuch an one as ought to be oppoſed? Every good Iriſhman will anſwer, yes! Have we not ſufficient experience, how fruitleſs all oppoſition is on the preſent ſyſtem? The people are divided, each party afraid and jealous of the other; they have only the juſtice of their cauſe to ſupport them, and that plea grievouſly weakened by the acknowledged excluſion of three-fourths of the nation from their rights as men: Government, *a foreign Government*, is a ſmall, but a diſciplined and compact body, with the ſword, the purſe, and the honours of Ireland at their diſpoſal: It is eaſy to ſee the event of ſuch an oppoſition to ſuch an Adminiſtration. It follows, that to oppoſe it with ſucceſs, the people muſt change their plan.

Do we not ſee the conduct of Government at this hour, and ſhall we not learn wiſdom, even from our enemies? They know that the Catholics hold the balance between them and that fraction of the nation, which we chuſe to dignify with the name of *the People*; and therefore, they court the Catholics. If they ſecure them, I ſhould be glad to know, what they have to fear with the immenſe power and influence attached to office, with the command

mand of the treaſury, and with the whole Catholic party, three-fourths of the kingdom, attached by gratitude to them, and alienated by repeated ſuſpicion, and unremitting ill uſage from their enemies.

In a word, the alternative is, on the one hand Reform, and the Catholics, juſtice and liberty; on the other, an unconditional ſubmiſſion to the preſent, and every future Adminiſtration, who may think proper to follow their ſteps, and who may indulge with eaſe and ſafety their propenſity to peculation and ſpoil, and inſult, while the people remain timid and divided. Between theſe you muſt chuſe, and chuſe immediately, and that choice may be final.

If the whole body of the people unite with cordial ſincerity, and demand a general Reform in Parliament, which ſhall include reſtitution of the elective franchiſe to the Catholics; we ſhall then, and not otherwiſe, have an honeſt and independent repreſentation of the people; we ſhall have a barrier of ſtrength ſufficient to defy the utmoſt efforts of the moſt profligate and powerful Engliſh Adminiſtration; we ſhall be enabled to avail ourſelves of the infinite advantages with which Providence has endowed our country; corruption ſhall

beannihilated, Government ſhall become honeſt per-force, and thereby recover at leaſt ſome of that reſpectability which a long courſe of political depravity has exhauſted: In a word, we ſhall recover our rank, and become a nation in ſomething beſide the name.

If on the other hand, we think reform too dear, when purchaſed by juſtice; if we are ſtill illiberal and blind bigots, who deny that civil liberty can exiſt out of the pale of Proteſtantiſm, if we with-hold the ſacred cup of *Liberty* from our Catholic Brother, and repel him from the communion of our natural rights, let us at leaſt be conſiſtent, and ceaſe to murmur at the oppreſſion of the Government which grinds us; let us bear, if we can, without wincing the whips and goads of our own tyrants, with the conſoling reflection, that we can act the tyrant in our turn, and gall the wretched ſlaves below us; let Adminiſtration proceed to play upon the terrors of the Proteſtants, the hopes of the Catholics, and balancing the one party by the other, plunder and laugh at, and defy both; let Engliſh influence meet and check our riſing commerce at every turn; let us remain obſcure and wretched, and unknown in Europe; let the bulk of the people

people continue barbarians, in hopeleſs and incurable ignorance, and wretchedneſs, and want: All is well, ſo long as we can prevent the Catholics from riſing to a rank in ſociety with ourſelves; we will, in the ſpirit of the envious man in the fable, bear to loſe one of our eyes, ſo that our neighbour may loſe both, and grope about in utter darkneſs.

BUT I will hope better things: The example of America, of Poland, and above all, of France, cannot on the minds of liberal men but force conviction. In France 200,000 Catholics deputed a Proteſtant, St. Etienne, to the National Aſſembly, as their repreſentative, with orders to procure, what has ſince been accompliſhed, an abolition of all civil diſtinctions, which were founded merely on religious opinions. In America, the Catholic and Proteſtant ſit equally in Congreſs, without any contention ariſing, other than who ſhall ſerve his country beſt: So may it be in Ireland! So will it be, if men are ſincere in their wiſhes for her proſperity and future elevation: Let them but conſider what union has done in ſmall ſtates, what diſcord in great ones: Let them look to their Government; let them look

look to their fellow ſlaves, who by coalition with them, may riſe to be their fellow citizens, and form a new order in their ſociety, a new era in their hiſtory: Let them once cry *Reform, and the Catholics* and Ireland is free, independent, and happy.

A NORTHERN WHIG.

BELFAST, AUGUST 1, 1791.

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Chambers was himself a leading member of The Society of United Irishmen and after the Rebellion of 1798 was banished to America where he died in 1837.

(I) M.J. Mac Manus, A bibliography of Wolfe Tone, Dublin 1940.

(2) Rebellion Papers, 620/19/29, State Paper Office, Dublin.

(3) Rebellion Papers, 620/19/30, State Paper Office, Dublin.

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